

What is claimed is:

Claim 1

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A communication support method used in a chat system  
structured to include chat devices connected to a network  
5 and which share virtual chat spaces configured on said  
network and which can send and receive messages among  
themselves, comprising:

associating and preparing specific keywords with  
specific categories;

10 specifying said keyword categories wherein at least one  
of said keywords are included in messages sent or received  
in a virtual space;

associating and storing said keywords and said keyword  
categories with virtual space identifiers of said virtual  
15 spaces in which messages are sent or received;

calculating characteristics of said virtual spaces  
based on said keyword categories associated with the  
virtual spaces; and

reporting said virtual space characteristics to users.

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Claim 2

A communication support system used in a chat system  
structured to include chat devices connected to a network  
and which share virtual chat spaces configured on said

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network and which can send and receive messages among themselves, comprising:

a category table for associating and storing specific keywords with specific categories;

5 a virtual space table for associating and storing virtual space identifiers, said keywords sent into said virtual spaces, and said keyword categories;

10 a control means for reading said keyword categories from said category table and for writing said virtual space identifiers of said virtual spaces into which at least one of said keywords were sent, said keywords, and said keyword categories in said virtual space table wherein a message sent into virtual space is acquired from said chat system and said message includes at least one of said keywords;

15 a decision means for calculating characteristics of said virtual space based on said keyword categories associated with the virtual spaces; and

an output means for outputting said characteristics of said virtual spaces.

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### Claim 3

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein said virtual space table associates and stores said virtual space identifiers, keywords, keyword categories and message

times at which said keywords were sent into said virtual spaces;

said control means additionally acquires said message times of said messages including keywords from said chat system and writes said keyword message times to said virtual space table; and

said decision means calculates said virtual space characteristics based on said keyword categories in accordance with chat volume in said virtual space from a message time until a specified time has elapsed.

#### Claim 4

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein said communication support system is additionally provided with a message volume storage means for storing message volume determined from a volume of messages sent from chat devices for each virtual space; and

said decision means calculates said virtual space characteristics based on said keyword categories sent by chat devices in accordance with said message volume of chat devices in said virtual spaces.

#### Claim 5

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein said communication support system is additionally provided

with a channel entry time storage means for storing said entry time a chat device entered a virtual space for each virtual space; and

said decision means calculates said virtual space characteristics based on said keyword categories sent by chat devices in accordance with said entry times said chat devices remain in said virtual spaces.

Claim 6

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein said decision means acquires specific rights that a chat device has in regard to a virtual space from the chat system, and calculates said virtual space characteristics based on said keyword categories sent by said chat devices in accordance with the rights of said chat devices in said virtual spaces.

Claim 7

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein said decision means compares said virtual spaces characteristics and a keyword category and decides whether or not to report a message to other chat devices wherein said message including a keyword is sent from a chat device into a virtual space; and

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said chat system sends the message in accordance with said decision.

Claim 8

5 The communication support system of claim 7, wherein decision means instructs the chat system to expel a chat device that sent an unsuitable message from a virtual space upon deciding that said message will not be reported to other chat devices; and

10 said chat system expels said chat device that sent said message from said virtual space in accordance with said instruction.

Claim 9

15 The communication support system of claim 7, wherein said decision means additionally has a blacklist that records chat devices that sent unsuitable messages wherein said decision means decided that said messages would not be reported to other chat devices,

20 said decision means decides that said messages will not be reported to other chat devices wherein the sending sources of said messages acquired from the chat system are included on said blacklist.

25 Claim 10

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The communication support system of claim 7, wherein  
said decision means decides whether to expel a chat device  
that sent an unsuitable message from a virtual space or to  
report a sent message to other chat devices based on the  
5 results of comparing virtual space characteristics and a  
keyword category.

Claim 11

The communication support system of claim 2, wherein  
10 said control means additionally acquires a message time of a  
message that includes at least one of said keyword from said  
chat system, and additionally writes said message time to  
said virtual space table, and deletes said keywords and  
keyword categories from said virtual space table wherein a  
15 specified time has elapsed since said message time.

Claim 12

A computer-readable recording medium on which is  
recorded a communication support program used in an  
20 information terminal capable of broadcasting a message to  
chat devices which share virtual spaces configured on a  
network and can send and receive messages among themselves,  
the control program executing the stages comprising:  
preparing a category table for associating and storing  
25 specific keywords with specific categories;

preparing a virtual space table for associating and storing virtual space identifiers of said virtual spaces, said keywords sent into said virtual spaces, and said keyword categories;

5 reading said keyword categories from said category tables and writing said virtual space identifiers of said virtual spaces into which said keywords were sent, said keywords, and said keyword categories to said virtual space table wherein a message sent in virtual space is acquired  
10 from said chat system and the message includes at least one of said keywords;

calculating characteristics of said virtual spaces based on said keyword categories associated with said virtual spaces; and

15 outputting said characteristics of said virtual spaces.

### Claim 13

A transmission medium transmitting a communication support program that reports virtual space characteristics  
20 to chat devices which share virtual spaces configured on a network and which can send and receive messages among themselves; the control program executing the stages comprising:

preparing a category table for associating and storing  
25 specific keywords with specific categories;

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preparing a virtual space table for associating and storing virtual space identifiers of said virtual spaces, keywords sent into in said virtual spaces, and keyword categories;

5 reading said keyword categories from said category table and writing said virtual space identifiers of said virtual spaces into which said keywords were sent, said keywords, and the keyword categories to said virtual space table wherein a message sent into a virtual space is  
10 acquired from said chat system and the message includes at least one of said keywords;

calculating the characteristics of said virtual spaces based on said keyword categories associated with said virtual spaces; and

15 outputting said characteristics of said virtual spaces.